

HALLMARKS



Spring 1996

EGGS BENEDICT

The yolk exploded onto the ham
and biscuit
Overflowing across my plate
Almost onto the table
and I was reminded of the meatball
that rolled right out the door
into the front yard
I licked my knife while my mother
shook her head and frowned
Crumbs fell onto tiled kitchen floor
My father are
with plastic chopsticks
My mother
rolled her eyes
I listened to the cat licking the floor
Spoonng our crumbs into his mouth
I put down my forkful of cheese grits
Crawled under the table
And pet the cat
time seemed to halt

Beneath the glass table I looked up
saw my mother staring at me
I looked away
The cat struggled out of my grip
I looked at my father
His eyes wandered towards me
bearing no signs of recognition
I held his gaze and tried to listen to
my mother's silent prayers
My mother closed her eyes
My father put his hand on the glass
Above my face
And I
wished that the table was made of wood
I could see the faint outline of my reflection
in the glass where his had rested
My mother uncrossed her legs
For an instant I thought I saw a flash
of pink underwear
My father dropped more food
I think he winked at me
My mother asked me what game I was playing
And I wanted to scream
But instead I only shrugged and looked away
I wondered if anyone would notice
if I was sucked into the floor
Before I tied my father's shoelaces together
with my own
I put my head on his knee
He patted my head
I did not need to speak
For an instant
He understood

ARS POETICA

this imp that's so thoroughly possessed me, leaves me rushed and hurried —
too much *time* to wait for this old macintosh to boot up —
ideas and words flee out my closed window.
it's by far past four and I've not slept a wink,
and so soon this fiend torments and jabs at th'idiom!

my god,
I heard the sweet trilling of what must have been a mockingbird, and knew I'd get no
rest until I wrote, told,
described the ups and coy downs of its scales and songs,
and raucous crickets scrapily celebrating
though now I don't hear them for the high hum of my bleak computer,
for the uneven tappatyping of my sleepless hands.

so my dry eyes, and so the stuffy blear behind 'em:
all the sleep I missed tonight has transmuted to cotton in my head,
or maybe it's what I didn't write while I attempted sleep.
oh, those sweet few moments this morning when I lay in my lovely bed not a slave to the
vampire Inspiration.

But I have two new shininggold pieces that I think are good
but then, I can't tell; Reason would never inhabit this hour!

SARAH COSTONIS (12)



AMBER WORRELL (11)

SKULL BOOTS

The little girl sits in the dark dark tv room, all browns and mahoganies except the giant glimmering screen and the white window. it is bright outside. maybe the room's not really dark, maybe it just seems dark contrasted with the blinding bright from outside. the girl is watching boring talk shows. she feels guilty for not being outside; she knows she is supposed to play outside during the summer. but it's too hot there. in here everything is dark and not too air-conditioned (her mom keeps the air conditioning down to \$ave) and doesn't smell like that decaying yellow green that's all around outside when it gets too hot. in here it smells like stiff leather sofa and the musty combination of old spilled ice cream on the big patterned rug. in here everything only slightly smells, is slightly lighted, and the girl can't feel the air at all (no wind inside).

the girl hears a car in the driveway. crunch crunch over the cement; but cement can't feel things. tires then turn too sharply at the curve in the driveway. she can hear the rubber groan, twisting against the cement. she likes to pretend, sometimes, that she isn't home, so she turns off the television and sinks below the arm of the sofa, scrunching her body between each end of its brown leather. blood rushes into her head, and her eyes pulse. she begins to chew the loose skin on one knuckle and suddenly wonders where her mom is. her dad is in belgium, land of chocolate and reason. she hopes the car's not a mailman because she knows she can't open the door right now.

knock knock at the kitchen door. it is impatient and rapping; she knows it's her brother. but she is in pajamas; she doesn't want him to see her. (she doesn't want to see him.) more knocks. she hopes he didn't see the television. she suddenly hates herself for not turning the television off as soon as she heard noise, instead of waiting until it was too late to hide, really. when he stops knocking, the girl's knuckle is pocked with toothmarks and white and stretched. then she hears jingling and clicking and then the shuffling sound of the door opening.

— but her mother had demanded back all of his house keys —

now she is unhappy. she wishes even more that she was outside. she hopes he won't see her. she tries to become one with the couch, tries to imagine herself as a rather lumpy cushion. she hears him walking down the long wooden hallway. he wears worn black leather boots with snakes and chains and skulls decorating them and silver tips too. he walks funny in heels. she closes her eyes. should she stop him? but . . . how . . . he's twenty. it's safer to pretend not to notice. and stop what? she's being ridiculous.

kethud. kethud. his heels deaden against the wooden hall. ridiculous has never made her thin back muscles tense like this. now he is close enough down the long hall that she could dash to the telephone and dial someone but not blurt out any message (besides, what to say). now he is close enough that she could reach the telephone, but not dial. or maybe dial three numbers, the ones she's kept memorized since second grade. but how can this be an emergency? maybe he is fine, maybe no bloodshot eyes pop out from behind his sharpcut nose. maybe.

but now he is close enough that he would stick out his arm, catch her stomach so hard it might knock the tense ball inside out. wiry arm muscles knocking too high because he is so much taller. almost knocking out her heart. he used to laugh, cackle; he would put his hand on her head and hold her at arm's length giggling. with her arms flailing at him, maybe she was shrieking, crying, "gimmie it back!"

he reaches the end of the hall. she hears him pause and turn towards her, not towards her parent's bedroom, which she had hoped. no, she had hoped he wouldn't go in there. no, she was not hoping at all. perhaps looking in the tv room (he must have seen the tv when it was on). her stomach begins to disappear. she must do something, stop him. or something.

she pretends to wake up. "jon?" she asks sleepily.

"Yeah. Hey, lil sis." he speaks fast like snake tongue.

"how'd you get in?" she pretends to be puzzled. "i didn't hear you."

"Sorry I woke you up. Door wadn't locked. I just came in after knockin'."

"but i thought the door was locked . . ." but then she can't go on really, because she'd have to expose his lies, his possession of the key, perhaps his intent . . . whatever it is. she unclenches her fists (when did they clench? but they're all sweaty now).

"Nope. Yeh, I thought it wa' kinda strange too. You shoul'be careful."

she is uncomfortable. she is angry. her knuckle hurts and her palms turn inside out with halfmoon fingernail prints. she wants to cry; she turns the television on again. he goes into the bedroom and shuts the doors. she can see the strip of yellow light from the lamp spilling through the doors onto the musty rug. she sees flashes as he moves in front of the light; only a strip of his silhouette. she hears him opening a drawer. hears him clear his throat. hears him looking through sock and suspenders and whatever else her father keeps in his bureau. she doesn't want to be there. she wishes she had been outside.

SARAH COSTONIS (12)

DESIRE

He dances in the dust—chanting, shrieking, flying. Tanned legs soaring above the earthen carpet—the floorboard of his home, the canopy of his parents, the hope of his people. Here on the flat vastness of depravity and drought, a solo performance is offered so that the rivers of heaven might spill downward, seeping into the cracks of nature's pavement. The infernal heat of this tropical prison attacks his skin and lungs and muscles. Closing his eyes, he sees the tears of his wife and hears the cry of his infant child. So he twists and turns in the wrath of the sun with rejuvenated speed and graceful precision, while the afternoon wind blows the selfish clouds across the sky and the great orange ball begins its slow tumble towards the land. And beneath the Zephyrs of injustice and man sweats in his eternal, fiery July—stomping his swollen feet and reaching out his blistered hands.

BRIANNE FRAZIER (12)

JUPITER

Dark storm clouds cross the sky:
Thunder rumbles, angry and low,
Across the void, twin light-bolts fly
And give the clouds a flashing glow.

Sheets of black rain fall through space,
Lit by sparks and cutting shines;
Lighting jumps in a blinding race,
Burning and searing in broken lines.

Racing fury flares again,
Force and power held in command;
Striking terror in mortal men,
A god who holds the storm in hand.

Riding the lighting,
Calling the rain,
A figure born to command the storm.

JANINE PETERSON (10)

PHOTOGRAPH

There is a picture of two people on page three of the thick, brown album on my living room shelf. The sacred photograph is perfectly balanced because it holds two intensely opposite figures. There is a five year old girl who is brightly garbed and curly-headed. Beneath her mass of blond locks is a scowling, sullen face. Her tear-stained cheek is pressed against the comfort of her grandmother's pastel dress. The child's eyes are directed downward in sadness or shame or anger, what exactly, I cannot remember, but I am sure that the little girl is me. The woman inside the pale, pink dress is stately and weathered. Beneath her mass of silver locks is a soft, smiling face. Her glasses-covered eyes stare ahead as her arms embrace the crying girl. Her lips are parted sending forth words of comfort, what words, I cannot remember, but I am sure that the woman is my grandmother.

Granny let me be a child that day as she hugged and kissed and "I loved you'd" away all of my troubles. However, only a few years later, I was expected to be all grown up and able to dry my tears without her.

They did not think I could understand, so they did not tell me what was happening. Sometimes moms and dads forget that little-girl eyes can see as clearly as their own, and little-girl minds can know when things are changing.

Messages undelivered; doors unlocked. Lost keys, lost letters, lost money. Toothpaste in the refrigerator; salt in the sugar bowl; hamburgers for breakfast.

She forgot to water her plants. She forgot to pay the gas bill. She forgot how to make her famous chicken soup. Then she could not remember names—sometimes the mailman's, sometimes the president's, sometimes mine.

The picture on page three still embodies the ideal equilibrium of child and adult. The opposing forces of distant generations hold it steady, only now the roles are reversed. I have acquired bits of her wisdom and sagacity, while she has succumbed to dementia and the frailties of old age. She was smart and funny, but now her brain is so poisoned that we cannot recognize each other. Time has rewarded me. It has allowed me to grow and experience and live, yet these same years have carried her further away from who she is. They have stolen her past.

Sometimes I look at this picture and wonder who these people are. I do not know either of them anymore, and they have become blurry, distant memories. Seeing these two figures joined by flesh and blood and friendship makes me feel angry and alone. Though I have attained more freedom and understanding, I wish I had not lost the innocence and originality of that child. But more than anything, I wish I had not lost my grandmother.

BRIANNE FRAZIER (12)

FRANTIC SCENT



KELLY JACKSON (10)

A wind filters through the
weeping willows, brushing back
a strand of hair to lean gently
within my side, kiss me on the cheek
with cool tendrils, and whisper
a hint of air, into my ear
Telling me something is not right
She weaves around me, phone cord,
covering my face in a
flowing veil-mist
she invades my mouth, eyes,
slipping in, surging
down my throat to tumble
and twist lungs, shudder
limbs, into a wipple dance
Lighter than flesh, she walks
me across the waters - swooping
coughing in an effort to rid myself
of this strange spider
weaving webs of atmosphere
into my limbs, invisible puppet
master of will,
she blows me over the cliffs,
tossed into clouds of sheeps'
wool, sharp. abrasive
till I was grated away
against the sky.

DEVON WILLIAMSON (10)



REAGAN BAYDOWN (11)

SIGN LANGUAGE

Steeple your fingers
 read them like
 the braille you always
 saw but never understood
 raised creases-
 ivy spread across your skin
 patterns that label you as you
 undeniable tattoos,
 inescapable as raindrops
 seeking parched roots
 shattered cuticles accuse you
 shreds of brittle nails
 knuckles chapped to white
 withered palms inside

tips of digits kissed in touch
 butterfly shadows have long since
 metamorphosed to
 crackled spiders against
 the wall, shrouding in
 gossamer fibers
 the hologram of youth
 that played across a
 troubled old mind like
 old home movies,
 sketchy and worn, shaking
 like your hands before
 you now.

DEVON WILLIAMSON (10)

SUNDAY AFTERNOONS

My mom has been promising me for the last seven years that we would stop going to these dead peoples' houses. But I'm going on fourteen now, and I've decided to stop believing that promise. Usually we go to these creepy places, or as mom prefers to call them—"Estate Sales"—every Sunday afternoon after church. I guess she figures that since we've just been to church then it's okay to rummage through dead peoples' stuff. Even after visiting a lot of the houses in our small town, I still don't feel right about the whole thing. And I'm not so sure mom feels all right with it either, but I've noticed over the years that this "hopping" does something for her. What exactly is hard to put my finger on, but afterwards she kind of acts like she does once she's had her three cups of coffee in the morning. Maybe this shopping was her way of looking for what had left us almost eight years ago, but I knew that her way was no way to find him. I stopped all my fussin' a long time ago and just gave up.

Today mom chose to peruse Mrs. Maybell Lewis' estate. This particular home looked like the rest in my town. Its once-white rickety pickety picket fence stood like a broken leg to which the rest of the old white-washed house was connected. The whole town practically was made up of these collapsing houses, all smooched together. Every time we visited one I think that if I ever got to fly in an airplane I would probably mistake my town for a large sheet of recycled paper in the middle of a corn field.

The air around Mrs. Lewis' was heavy like the air after a summer rain. It seemed to be pushing on the top of my head, like I used to push down my jack-in-the-box and then wind it up. I felt almost a whole inch shorter with my hands dangling somewhere down around my feet. I've noticed that no ivy groups up the sides of the house, it probably would have been too difficult a climb against that kind of pressure. And no windows were ajar for fear this almost liquid-like air would seep into the house and soil the precious sale-items. Then I thought of Mr. Forester, my mad-scientist of a geology teacher, with his crazy theories. Just last Friday he told our class that he hypothesized that every time someone breathed they could be breathing a molecule of Caesar's dying breath. Of course he had calculated this theory and found it to be true, but I had remained skeptical up until today. But with the air like this, I thought I could almost taste that old Roman guy for sure.

Mom crossed the threshold first, expecting me to follow, but I spotted this sea shell in the corner of the porch and couldn't refuse my curiosity. Ever since we moved from the beach in Virginia to here I would jump at any sign of sea-

life. But its small white body seemed lost so close to this sea of old lady junk. I pocketed it as a luck charm and walked inside. I figured that now Mrs. Lewis was dead I was the one that needed the luck, so it was alright if I took a little something for myself. As soon as I was inside, I noticed that this sale was very orderly compared to others I had seen. Naturally I concluded that The Daughter's of the Confederacy must have been in charge, since they do this sort of thing you know. And after all Mrs. Lewis had been a member. In fact I heard that she had been the president for a term when she wasn't so old.

The clothes were to my right, so I started there as I watched my mom be enveloped by another part of the sea. The first thing I spotted was a slinky brick-red dress spotted with gold roses. I looked at the designer label that read "Sexy, sexy woman," and I thought of Mrs. Lewis. A wave of nausea settled over me as I imagined my middle school librarian wearing anything that connoted sexy, much less said it on the dress. I moved on. I came to a table upon which were folded scarves, linens, etc. I picked out what was definitely not the most elegant of the scarves, but seemed to be the most exotic of the selection. It had been loved, or at least used, considering its frayed edges and faint bodily odor. I guess, now that she was dead, I hoped the same was true for Mrs. Lewis, not the bodily odor or anything, but rather that she too had been loved. I know I hadn't loved her, but I sure hope that someone had. I couldn't imagine a worse way to die than without any loved ones.

From this table I moved to an adjacent table, now in hopes of finding a third interesting object. I had spotted it. The perfect place to keep my new luck charm—a large poison ring. Its tarnished silver resembled the rest of the jewelry on the table, but the antique combination of blackened silver and the ring's green stone seemed to make it a wonderfully suitable hiding place for my shell. All I had to do was open the ring's little hatch on top, and tuck my charm away for safe keeping. It made me feel like a pirate carefully hiding my loot. I stuck it on my left thumb, since the rest of my fingers were too skinny, and walked back further into the house.

Down a long corridor, on my way to the sunlit window at the end of the hall, I came across shelves covered with memoirs from a beach— conch shell, sand, and a collection of small seaside landscapes. I immediately thought of my shell. Did it too come from this Florida beach, or was it really from a deserved island in the Pacific, as I preferred to think? Had Mrs. Lewis been a lover of the beach like I was? But that couldn't be possible. She was just an old crabby librarian, who always shushed us while we poured over the teen magazines in the library carrels. When I looked into these small paintings on the shelf

though, I almost wished Mrs. Lewis were here, so I could ask her about these places in the paintings. But I guess it was too late now. I wish I had known.

As I thought of Mrs. Lewis collecting sea-shells in the sand, I felt mom's grip around my shoulders indicating that it was time to go. I showed her the two items that I had found during the sale, and she agreed to buy them while partially in a stupor that I had actually found some things that I liked at an estate sale. I was surprised myself. I guess I don't mind going to these dead people's houses so much after all. But I think after today, I'd like to start visiting some of these houses before the estate sales are necessary.

KRISTIN SMITH (12)

A POEM

I never now what I want till I lose it.
I don't know what to say till it's past.
I didn't know how good I really had it,
And now you're gone.

KELLY JACKSON (10)

UNDER THE TABLE

It's pretty gross down here
and there are cobwebs on the oak legs-
cobwebs that are too old to be inhabitable by spiders but not old
enough to yet disenegrate
And the floor needs to be swept and is hard and cold
and is grinding my shoulder blades
But I imagine the legs of my father sitting at his place for dinner,
the way they used to look when I climbed under the table to reclaim my lost knife
and there's where my brother with a huge magic marker wrote:
"Mary and Asher's jail"
I used to have my own set of chopsticks, and a bowl, and a placemat
I would sit here for hours with my chopsticks and placemat, brushing off cobwebs
when they got in my hair
And I used to play coppers with my older brother and wait patiently
forever on the floor
I don't do that anymore

MARY DUDLEY (12)

HALLMARKS IS MY LIFE

I have nothing.
I am empty.
I have given all. Each fall and spring
I heed the call and pour my heart into the box.
(the boxes that *I* made . . . the duty that *I* paid . . .)
My consciousness resides inside, a subtle fox
who crouches in the chicken coop and waits. I wait
for white papers to wander in, clucking like aimless chickens.
And then,
I feed!
I feed! Forgive my greed.
I live on leftover emotions—futile. For now
I am left with
nothing. Chickenfeed.

SARAH CHISOLM (12)



KATIE STEVENS (12)

COSMOS

"Wrap around porches make the best talking places." Alex said. Smiling, she walked toward the porch swing, smoothed the legs of her cutt off denim shorts, stretched her long tanned arms and lowered herself gently hoping that the swing would not fall down again.

"It's too hot." Amy sighed taking a pack of Drum Tobacco laying a pile on some paper and rolling the small mound into a cigarette. Amy scanned the horizon with her hand up to her chisled forehead shielding her eyes from the setting sun.

"It'll get cooler, I think. It might rain, maybe." Alex said meeting Amy's eyes in a glance then looking away grinning, embarrassed at the way she looked at her.

With her eyes still fixed on Alex the corner of Amy's mouth turned upward slightly at Alex's silly show of emotion. She placed the cigarette in her thin lips, drew the lighter from her pocket, cupped her hands around her mouth, and struck the lighter twice. Inhaling to catch her first breath of nicotine she began to speak but stopped. Nothing would come. She looked at the sloping hills around her which shined yellow green with the last rays from the sun. The breeze felt cool on her burned shoulders. A ribbed cotton tank top fell loosely on her frame. Jeans baggy and faded hung comfortably on her curvy hips.

"This porch is a miracle." Amy thought to herself as she scanned its perimeter. It sagged so heavily on one side any ball would quickly roll toward the swing. She bought the house for the porch, Alex for the swing. Although it was sparsely furnished what they did have was enough: a couple of chairs, tables, foot stools, and the swing.

"Alex," Amy thought as a wave of heat filled her lungs with a sence of pleasure only felt with the mention of her name. Vibrant brown hair shown like the rich color of melting chocolate. Her eyes, closed now, burn green when she is mad, grow greener when she is not. Her lower lip stuck out over her upper as if she was pouting, but she was just thinking. Her short fingers were woven like latus while resting on her chest.

Exhausted Amy collapsed in a wicked chair filled with mix matched pillows, reached for the heart shaped hot pink ash tray which they won at the local carnival and put out her cigarette. Reaching for the tobacco again Amy watched the sun slip away leaving a clouded night sky.

The clouds burst with a quick sheet of water that hit the roof like a thousand drummers.

Alex opened her eyes, yawned and caught Amy's view. With the meeting of their eyes Alex said, "Have you ever seen the cosmos aligned? Have you ever felt whole?"

Before Amy could reply Alex rose to her feet, jumped off the porch and danced in the rain.

"Yeah," she replied almost not talking loud enough to hear. After taking one more drag she placed the half finished cigarette in the tray to burn it self out and joined her.



TARA SWITTER (12)

RASPBERRY CLOTILDE

I say your name again and again and I remember listening to the Rolling Stones in your
black car and I remember
feeling pure when you shared yourself with me
You belonged to me before we were forced to slip back down into normalcy and compla-
cency
doing our math problems and grammar diagramming sentences that described ice-cream
and amusement parks
you gave me your jacket the purple one to keep me warm I suppose but all I felt was cold
and empty and now I
resume my quest for purity
But first I have to learn my long division
Starting in a shoe store I decided to kill my parents and myself wipe the slate clean free
the word of the burdens our
lives had become
sucking water and food and air and emitting hate and carbon dioxide
but my blueprints were destroyed
so I fell back into the seventh grade where I did science projects and smoked unfiltered
Camels
submitting to the image of teenage angst with my purple hair
Then you came sprouted up when I was late one day and I couldn't admit it
I denied your presence defied your existence until I'd held you for 3 months and 4 days
and I needed to get rid of
you because I needed to be pure
So I went and I and the counselor decided abortion was the best option for us
So now you're gone but I feel dirtier than before and following the advice of my preacher
seek some asylum in
The Word
Only I see myself highlighting and outlining studying like I'm going to take a test
so I stop
I sleep restlessly through half nights and days even with the help of all my pills
and I long for the years when I played dress-up with Daniel
we got married and kissed and played sardines in hot attic air space
I memorize vocabulary words and wish for my innocence which was lost
when I was eleven and I saw my grandfather kill a rooster
or maybe a chicken
that ran around in circles spilling blood in front of me and I just watched it die
and later I laughed and ate it fried with mashed potatoes lima beans peach cobbler and
lemonade
School is a never ending introduction to my education
i know you exist God but where can you be i've looked in all the right places the pantry
the closet under the bed
i gave up searching and smoke things other than cigarettes
and all i want is pureness
but it has hidden from me
so all I can do is homework for Monday, Tuesday, Friday
and again



KELLY JACKSON (10)

HARD LOVE

He makes me feel all twisted inside,
a clawing at my heart.
It hurts to watch him move and speak,
only me alone.
His arms like wooden woven sinew I can see hold me tight.
Grasping and pulling,
crushing me against his ribs.
My eyes flutter as he forces me closer still.
I breathe my last breath, and all that's left is . . .
love.

KELLY JACKSON (10)

DAPHNE AND APOLLO'S FASHION SENSE

Apollo, haughty after conquering the Python, sees Cupid tugging the bending taut string of his bow. "What's it to you, little boy? Bows and arrows are for men, for warriors like me. (Egads, I'm the best!) That little bow would go great on my tanned muscular shoulders; you just have the wrong skin tone for that shade of gold, kid. You gotta get fashion sense before you can pretend to be such a great god like me. No animal can escape my arrow; when I release my bow their death is inescapable! Just now, I pressed in on the Python through that whole field with arrow after arrow—it's full of his belly's deadly poison now which I've avoided with nimble feet. Nope, I won't ever have to worry about huge spherical snakes with strange liquids inside them ever again. You—be satisfied with your trifling little cares, but use a slingshot or something, won't you? It's unseemly to have an Olympian walking about in such a struggle!"

Proud Venus' chubby boy eyed the snout-nosed god and replied, "Go ahead and pierce all the animals you want, Phoebus; you'll be penetrated by my arrow. Beasts may yield to you, but just as much to me do even the highest gods yield. Remember, it's not the size of the arrow, but what you do with it, that counts." The boy flapped his wings wildly for a few seconds before achieving takeoff. (Venus had been attempting to put her son on Weight Watchers for years, but he never complied and was less than aerodynamic by this point.) But the strong mountain Parnassus held itself firm and Cupid hoisted himself into the air, took aim, and shot two arrows. You and I both know what these arrows are for, so I'll skip to the exciting part. Ha ha, I'll skip to the chase . . . get it?

Now, Peneus' daughter Daphne (not Diana, but Daphne, get that straight), was a bit of a loner. The only thing we know about her, besides her phenomenal running skills, is that she revels in the bloody animal corpses of her hidden woods and that she knows just how to wrap her father around her finger. Picture her with streaming brown hair all tangled, fluttering her eyelashes sweetly and puckering her lips in an attempt to seem like a 12 year old again, running up to craggy, creaky (or is it creeky?) old Peneus. "Oh Daddy! Look at this pretty flower. Isn't it such a pretty flower? I love pretty flowers. Gosh, I think they're swell. But I hate it when they die, Daddy. They always turn so ugly when they get picked. Why is that? And then they die. Gee, I want to be pretty and young forever. I love you Daddy!" Then she slaps her thin fingers about his sturdy neck and tries to babble innocently about how much she loves him and doesn't want to ever love any man other than him. How very shrewd, Daphne! Especially for a dumb nymph.

So here's this virgin wandering about the wood with twigs caught in her hair and that untamed look in her eyes which me so often confuse for carnal passion. And there walks Apollo, whose very marrow has been pierced by Cupid's arrow. Hmmm, that's a nice little rhyme. But it's really a rather repulsive image. Have you ever seen marrow? It's that yellowish white slime inside the veal bones in *osso bucco*. It tastes rather salty. And marrow is inside bones, is it not?

Anyways, Apollo has this love arrow sticking out of his innards when he first sees Daphne. Now he desires to join with her, which one could translate as marry . . . and he wants to do what he desires. Ahem. Ovid, did you Latin people use the same idiom fourth graders use ("She said that Mary did it! You know, *did it!*") At any rate, he can't see his own future, but then, what lover can? All loves are tragedies; none of them last one's entire life unless you die first and what's the fun in that? He virtually has a heart attack when he sees her. Musta been the sudden withdrawal of blood from his veins. Enough of that, oh gutter-obsessed brain!

Back to the chase. He sees her tangled hair, still tied by the blood spattered ribbon, and thinks, "Now, that girl is just gorgeous, but red just isn't her color. She needs some

pastels, and some nice diamond earrings, and perhaps some of that Elizabeth Arden "Sunflowers" perfume." He glimpses the lips, still dripping with the juices of the last animal she caught and basted, and can hardly restrain himself from running up to her and kissing her wildly. So he indeed starts running. He sees those coaxing thin fingers and clasping forearms and halfway bare shoulders, and the parts he couldn't see, he imagined. She has seen him and runs swifter than the light breeze upon which Apollo's shouted words are carried.

"Hey, girl, you're Peneus' daughter, right? Wait up just a sec! I'm not an enemy! Wait! Stay there, dumb nymph! Look, stupid lambs flee from voracious wolves, swift does from golden lions, trembling gentle doves from the ever pursuing eagle. But love is the cause of my chase!" Golden Apollo paused to catch his breath and tried to speed up, but he tripped a bit on a large stump. He caught himself easily and continued his pursuit—he was hungry for love. But that Daphne sure was swift, and scared too; he could see her limbs tremble. She must have been pretty dumb, though, because she neither paused nor looked back. He tripped again, and moaned:

"Ouch, by Jove! Oops, sorry, Dad. Oh, dear virgin, don't fall and scratch your pretty face, OK? I don't want to see you all scarred up! This forest is too wild for running," Apollo ducked another branch awkwardly, panted, and yelled again, "so if you'll run slower, I'll chase slower. Deal?" No response. "Oh, I know why you're fleeing! You think I'm just some bumpkin or hick, some lusty shepherd. Well, I don't see any cattle, do you? I'm not chasing after idiotic mute beings who live only for eating and running about in the woods! Look, just ask me who I am!"

Pant, pant, crackle crackle. The woods blur about Apollo as he shouts this, and again receives no response, so again, plunges into speech. "I am Apollo! Phoebus Apollo! I am so great! I rule healing, and oracular prophesy, and music, and philosophy, and Delphus, and I'm the best shot west of Parnassus! How can you resist me now?" Evidently she could.

By now, Apollo's endurance was down; it was hard to shout and run at the same time. So he decided it's better to leave such flatteries until after the marriage; besides, a briar branch had just torn off a bit of clothing that the wind had blown out. She was quite a desirable sight: hair and clothes streaming behind her, hands clenched into frightened fists, lips bitten in concentration. Some men say that women are most attractive when they're angry, but Apollo decided that nothing could make his very marrow jump like the glimpse of the fear crossing Daphne's face. How cute! She's scared of being raped! How very quaint; how much like his sister, thinks Apollo as he ducks another branch.

Apollo lopes after her, spurred by desire, and Daphne flees from the nameless noise behind her. She feels him threaten her evasive back, and trembles on; can almost now feel his hot breath on her bare shoulder; can hear his heart pounding red hot beating blood through his veins but thank God there's the cool flow of my father, but what can I do, how can I escape this man who is so close and strong and self assured maybe I should give in but she again feels the prick of Cupid's arrow and does not want to be penetrated by any more messy emotions and cries:

"Father! help —"

Her hands stretch up in prayer; her feet begin to stick to and then pierce the ground, her new roots puncture Mother Earth and hold her fast as her legs bind together, tight toned muscled becoming cellulose and xylem, her heart is encircled with a wooden shield, her shining hair now not only carries twigs but grows them as well; is this what a man considers being helpful?



ASHLEY HORNE (12)

Apollo views the new Daphne with dismay. He didn't want her to have such an extensive makeover, and besides, these natural tones just don't suit her. "Shoulda been pastels, like I said. Well, since I'm not gonna *marry* you now, I'll have you anyway. You'll be my tree. My shining hair, my golden quiver, my harmonious lyre will always exhibit you, for every man to see. The corrupt Latin generals will promenade with you down the streets for all the Capitoline to view. You will always be mine and always be displayed as long as my head is young—and hey, I'm eternal!" Apollo leaned against the tender tree. "You'll like being exposed, right?" He stood back up to see Daphne's response. The tree bobbed and nodded at the top as he removed his weight.

Well, some loves are more tragic for one partner than the other.

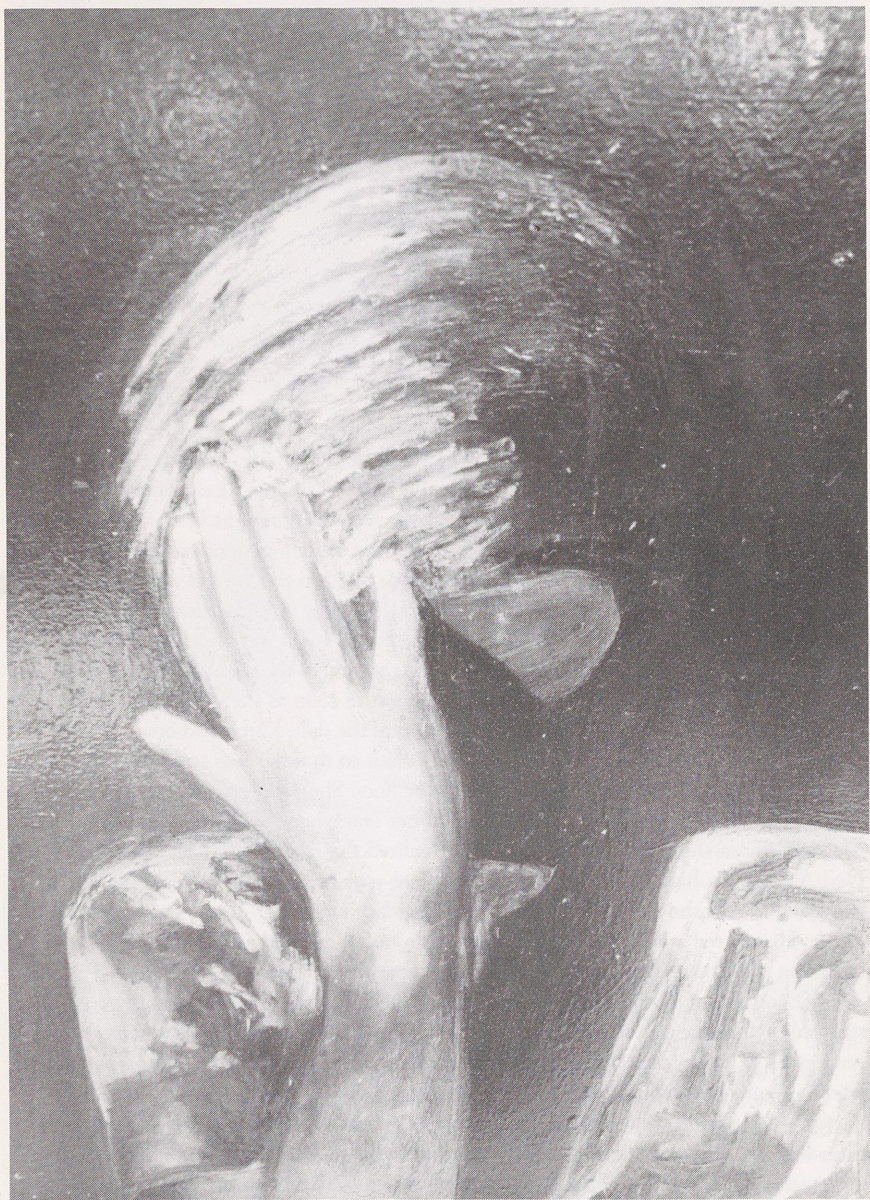
SARAH COSTONIS (12)

AUNT KAREN

My Aunt Karen loves to dance. Not professionally, just socially. She always tells me that the feeling she gets as she glides and sways across the dance floor is the most indescribable sense of freedom and satisfaction that she can relate to no where else in her life but on a ballroom floor. It is always easy for me to envision her moving around the wide open space of the floor, sweating lightly in her lavish dresses as the wine that she had had with her dinner restored in her new energy and need to cover the entirety of the ballroom. She has always been an attractive woman—tall with legs that seemed to go on forever and that walked with the rhythm and power of a tree blown restlessly about by the wind. The features on her face are perfectly placed and defined, and her eyes remind me of rich, dark green velvet in the way they shine when in the light, but possess a certain coarseness and texture that repeatedly make me stare whenever I see her. She is beautiful. I have pictured her this way, in all her elegance and class, for as long as I could remember, and I am proud of her character and equally as jealous of her appearance.

I once asked her why she adored dancing so much, and she laughed aloud as a memory crossed her mind that she clearly had not thought of for some time. She had always had a natural sense of rhythm, she told me (as if I did not already know), and she could just feel the beats of the music in her as she would begin to at first twitch in her shoulders and feet, then be drawn from her chair in a sudden rush of intensity. However, there was a single event, she admitted that, "Made me into the kind of dancer that I am today. ..." In the winter of 1977, she had visited the windy city of Chicago for a weekend with one of her friends, and on their way to the art institute, they had decided to grab a quick lunch at a restaurant right down the street. In the middle of their lunch, my Aunt's friend left to go to the bathroom, and almost as soon as she disappeared behind the door, someone entered the suffocating crowd of the deli. Karen had been sitting cross-legged at her table, slightly turned in her chair so that her legs stretched from underneath the table and into the middle of the floor. She was reading an outdated paper which she had discovered lying there in her seat when she felt a sharp pressure on her foot. Karen shifted her eyes upward and realized that she was staring into the eyes of Fred Astaire. He had, of course, aged a good deal—by now, he was in his sixties—but she claimed that she would have recognized that face anywhere. It was too handsome to forget. He uttered a brief "do pardon me, ma'am" as he grinned and touched her delicately on the elbow, then continued on to the counter.

There she sat, her arm still tingling where he had touched her, unable to respond, suddenly self-conscious, wishing she were Ginger Rogers. She had stared at him for the remainder of lunch, only half finishing her food, and distracted by her friend's persistent *what-is-wrong-with-you's*. Fred Astaire had stepped on her toes. Each time she said that in her head, a smile crept across her face and remained there for some time afterward. She swears to this day that when Fred (she speaks as though they were on a first name basis) stepped on her foot, some of his dancing talent had rubbed off onto her. She believes with all her heart that she can turn better, jump further, and leap higher than she could before the deli incident, and that, she explains, is the reason why she loves to dance.



MARY DUDLEY (12)

ENVY SITS

Envy sits
her spine rigid
inaudible acidic laugh
as she concocts sadistic daydreams,
dark eyeslits searing
her rival charring under her scathing stare

Yet
she scratches her scabs
bites down her nails to burning nubs
allowing crimson to cover her unloved skin
relieving her masochistic jealousy
spitting fingernail bits at her antagonist

She pokes my ribs then whispers in my ear,
Double-daring me to play with her

I begin to watch with Envy.

LIZ LIGON (12)

THAILAND

My necklace
is like your hands around my throat
Boxing me in
And then you kiss the welts on my neck
after you stroke my hair
you feed me mustard seeds
They grow in my brain
out of my ears and mouth
Vines wrap around your ankles
dragging you down for awhile
Bitter seeds settle in my uterus
like lead
And I have slept too long to dream

SARAH NORRIS (10)

THE PARABLE OF A LEAF

A leaf fell to the ground
And as you reached over to pick it up
your arm became my leg.
And we walked like that,
your head down at my feet,
and we were fine.
But then I started to run
and dragged you along behind me,
until my leg came off
and I fell alone. Amidst
more of those falling leaves,
that buried me.
I looked up and saw
the sun hurtling toward
me, and it was your face.
Those leaves, they melted, and
your face became mine.
Soon we walked again,
your arms my legs, my eyes your toes.
But we never got father than halfway,
then halfway again,
and again. Never completing,
or going anywhere.

DEVON WILLIAMSON (10)

Editors:

Sarah Chisolm

Sarah Costonis

Liz Ligon

Jamie Taylor

Sponsor:

Ms. Karen Roark

Staff:

Helen Gorodetsky

Mary Michael Johnson

Becky McKay

Sarah Norris

Jessica Tucker

Devon Williamson

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